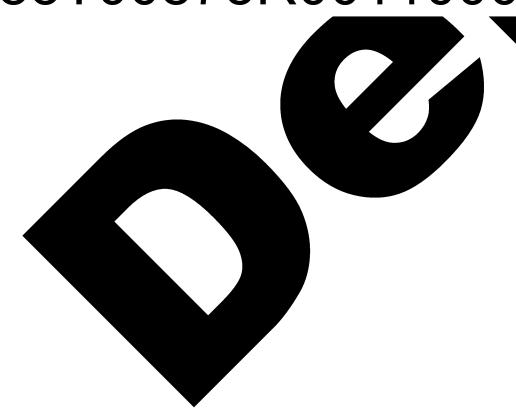
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Developments in Indochina

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State Dept. review completed



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	The Khmer insurgents are promising a new countrywide offensive this dry season that will bring "total victory" to Communist forces. They are also warning Si-	
25X1	hanouk that they have no interest in nego- tiations.	25X1
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	conscription drive in Phnom Penh is going fairly well. More than 6,000 men have been processed in the first month.	
	NORTH VIETNAM	
25X1	Both privately and publicly, Peking appears to be urging restraint on the North Vietnamese.	25X1

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SOUT	H VIETNAM
	The Communists have escalated the fighting this week with two attacks on government border camps and a heavy rocket and mortar attack on Bien Hoa Air Base. The head of the Viet Cong delegation in Paris acknowledges that the PRG structure in South Vietnam is neither extensive nor uniform.
LAOS	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Prime Minister Souvanna finally has National Assembly approval to move ahead with the formation of a new coalition government.

CAMBODIA

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Sihanouk's Troubles

The Khmer Communists have bluntly rejected Sihanouk's recent public assessment that they will be unable to achieve a military solution in Cambodia during the forthcoming dry season. In a "birthday greeting" to the Prince on 26 October, Sihanouk's in-country "defense minister," Khieu Samphan, stated that the war is entering a "decisive and irreversible phase" that will soon lead to "total victory." He referred to forthcoming dry season offensives "in all regions," indicating that the Communists may intend a widespread offensive rather than one aimed exclusively at the capital itself.

Evidence was not long in coming that Samphan is not necessarily exaggerating the prospects for heavy fighting. Over a period of a few days beginning on 3 November the insurgents inflicted sharp defeats on government forces on Route 5, and at two positions south of Phnom Penh. The tactical importance of these locations is not great, but government losses were very heavy and defeats this early in the dry season will have a demoralizing effect on government troops.

Samphan's message is almost insulting. It asks Sihanouk to "accept our wishes...for the complete liberation of Cambodia during this dry season," and states that "all our people, cadres, and combatants will oppose any effort to negotiate with the government in Phnom Penh." A subsequent insurgent statement makes clear that the Khmer Communists will not negotiate with any third party either. The birthday message seems to confirm Sihanouk's private statements that he wants a negotiated settlement in Cambodia but cannot get the leaders in the field to concur.

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The Conscription Campaign Continues	25×

Phnom Penh's drive to obtain 25,000 new troops for the Cambodian Army's general reserve has gone relatively well in its first month. Civil officials in the capital have generally been doing a fairly good job of handling the bureaucratic complexities of the government's conscription program. So far, over 5,500 draftees and volunteers have passed through the city's induction centers. Another 1,100 men-most of whom were presumably seeking to avoid service in the army-have enlisted in the Khmer Navy.

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Despite this initial progress, however, it appears that harder times are ahead for the government's manpower effort. Registration lists for the capital have been nearly exhausted and the National Police have had little success in rounding up the numerous draft evaders. In an effort to ensure a continuation of the present flow of recruits, the draft has been extended into the countryside around the capital and into the provinces. The government is also encouraging groups to enlist en masse. None of these new measures, however, has as yet produced any notable results.

Another problem is that the army has had some trouble processing the recruits. Two thirds of the 700 recruits at the Lovek training camp north of Phnom Penh, for example, have deserted because of poor accommodations and food. Desertions from other camps have not been as numerous, but the US Embassy reports that food, housing, and medical care facilities are inadequate at most camps. The training staffs themselves suffer from poor morale and discipline. Army commander in chief General Sosthene Fernandez reportedly is taking steps to correct these deficiencies, including the appointment of a new director of training. It seems unlikely, however, that the government will have large numbers of new troops in time to participate in the early round of dry season fighting.

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NORTH VIETNAM

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Peking Urges Restraint

Peking continues to signal that it favors restraint by all sides in South Vietnam. The Chinese still have not commented on Vietnamese Communist protests of the past several weeks over allied ceasefire violations and their implied threats to take retaliatory military action. Supporting Chinese commentary has customarily followed official Vietnamese Communist statements within days. Peking also has deleted threatening language and harsh criticism of the US from Vietnamese propaganda material that it has carried in the Chinese press.

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There are recent signs, moreover, of differences between China and North Vietnam, perhaps over the level of Chinese military assistance—a subject that has caused friction before. Chinese treatment of Premier Pham Van Dong's passage through Peking early this week seemed no more than the minimum required by protocol. Although Chou En-lai greeted Dong's party at the airport, a lesser official saw the Vietnamese off. There was no banquet given for the Vietnamese, no public statements or speeches, and no characterization of the atmosphere between the to sides—usually

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25X1	"cordial and friendly" during comparable stopover in the past.	?s 25X
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SOUTH VIETNAM

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Communists Conduct Major Attacks

Communist forces last weekend staged a major attack against two remote government outposts in Quang Duc Province along the Cambodian border in what is described as the largest tank battle since the cease-fire in January. Using approximately 20 Soviet-built tanks, heavy artillery, and ground-to-air missiles, elements of the Viet Cong 9th Division overran Bu Bong and Bu Prang. Losses on both sides reportedly were heavy.

Major General Toan, Military Region 2 commander, is personally supervising government counterattacks and is employing at least two regiments of reinforcements flown in from Pleiku. Toan has been under pressure from Saigon following the loss in September of Plei Djerang Ranger Camp in Pleiku and obviously views the current Communist attacks as both a test of South Vietnamese resolve and his ability to command. The Communists claim that the attack was in response to recent government operations.

The Communists also shelled the sprawling Bien Hoa Air Base with a heavy rocket and mortar barrage on 6 November--the largest action this close to Saigon since the cease-fire. Although casualties were light and damage was limited to some fighter-bombers and a machine shop, the attack demonstrates that the Communists still can make trouble close to the capital. A government spokesman labeled the attack "a challenge and a provocation to the International Commission of Control and Supervision" and suggested that it may be the prelude to more intense Communist military activity throughout the region.

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PRG Administration Flexible

If Nguyen Yan Hieu, the head of the PRG delegation to the bilateral talks in Paris, is to be believed, the

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Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) has not yet developed a uniform system of administration in the "liberated areas." Instead, the Communists appear to be allowing local situations to determine the appropriate system of governing.

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there was considerable variation from area to area. In some areas, there is no need for land reform because the task was already accomplished by the Thieu government. In other areas the PRG has been content to allow landlords to rent out land and collect a percentage of the crop from the peasants who work the land. In the interest of limiting this kind of capitalistic exploitation, however, the Communists have reduced the percentage that landlords can collect-from 50 percent to 20 percent.

The question of how the PRG governs, or even whether there is an actual PRG administrative structure operating throughout the "liberated areas," has always been elusive. Hieu's comments tend to confirm suspicions that there is no well-organized, uniform structure. In many areas, traditional Viet Cong party and military structures probably continue to function with little more than a passing nod to maintaining a pretense of a functioning PRG, and Hieu sounds like a man trying to put the best possible face on this situation.

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A Step Forward

Like Vientiane's rush hour traffic, movement toward implementation of the peace accords has been fitful at best. After weeks of hand-wringing and a last-minute threat of a vote of no confidence, the National Assembly passed a resolution (just hours before its adjournment on 7 November) endorsing in lukewarm fashion the peace agreements and the principle of a new coalition government. Although the endorsement was not all that Souvanna had hoped for, the Prime Minister will no doubt interpret it as fulfilling the constitutional requirement of assembly approval for a new coalition government.

At first glance, it would appear that all that remains is for Souvanna to put together a list of his new cabinet and take it to Luang Prabang for the King's approval and subsequent investiture. It is not quite that simple, however. Souvanna still does not have the Communists' slate of candidates. The Communists have said that they will not have these names ready until all their security people and staff are in Vientiane and Luang Prabang; that may take some time. The flights bringing these personnel into the twin capitals have resumed and probably will be completed by 16 November, when the Communists will have some 1,300 security and administrative people in Vientiane.

Although the assembly is not scheduled to reconvene until next spring, Souvanna's problems with the sometimes obstreperous deputies may not end with the assembly's adjournment on 7 November. The resolution in support of Souvanna's efforts to form a new government also included language calling for continued consultation between the assembly and

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Souvanna. At least some deputies believe that Souvanna will have to obtain their approval when he is ready to form his new government. Their efforts seem designed not so much to obstruct Souvanna as to obtain some high positions for themselves in the new coalition government. If Souvanna obtains the King's full backing to go ahead with his plans for a new government, he probably will try to bypass the assembly. The deputies could still cause trouble, however, by taking their complaints to top military leaders who are already upset that Souvanna allowed the Communists to move security forces into Vientiane with few controls.

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